

Swann, Pam

From: spudsrus@epix.net
Sent: Tuesday, July 11, 2006 5:52 PM
To: DocketClerk, MOAB
Subject: COMMENTS ON THE UGLY RIPE TOMATOES

Docket Clerk, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, AMS
United States Department of Agriculture 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Stop 0237
Washington, DC 20250-0237

To Whom It May Concern,

As a veteran of thirty-four years in the produce business I would like to offer my comments on the proposed rule change that would exempt the UglyRipe from the shape standards and allow these delicious tomatoes to be shipped across the country on a year round basis.

These rule changes are critical to the support of sustaining agricultural research by private companies into improving flavor and varieties to encourage greater consumption of fresh produce.

If any marketing board or state commodity committee can exclude a successful new produce item by utilizing old standards that do not apply to new and innovative varieties, we as a nation will not be able to make the necessary improvements in produce to increase consumption.

We have always felt that the ugly ripe was a premium product and was always priced higher than regular round tomatoes. Those buyers that want a good shaped tomato at a reasonable price will continue to buy tomatoes as they always have.

The ugly ripe tomato is a variety in and of itself and as such commands a high market premium and attracts a customer base willing to pay a premium for flavor at the expense of shape. These customers should be allowed to purchase these tomatoes and continue to encourage farmers across all commodities and in all states to develop new and exciting items in produce.

We felt all along that the Florida committee was failing to see that people who get a great tomato experience will increase their consumption.

We are of the opinion that the Ugly ripe and it's ability to market without restriction will be a driver to better tomato flavor being developed in all tomato varieties and this would be very good for the entire industry.

Certainly our agriculture community needs to add great flavor to the total produce experience. When this happens, more and more people will make produce the center of their diet and we as a nation will move to better health.

Sincerely,

Harris Cutler

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